

# The Great Tidepool

**TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA**  
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)



## WELCOME TO OCEAN GROVE

It's a coastal enclave known for its Victorian homes, inns, and throwback charm—often described as “a town where time seems to have stood still.” It began as a Methodist retreat not long after the Civil War, featuring hundreds of tent cabins, many of which were transformed into cottages. It had an early history of strict blue laws—no liquor, no card playing, no dancing, no bathing or boating on Sunday. It has a vibrant historical society that offers walking tours. It has streets named Surf and Central Avenue...

And it's not Pacific Grove. Except that it is, sort of.

Pacific Grove was founded in 1875, when David Jacks sold land to the Pacific Improvement Company, which donated acreage towards the first West Coast Chautauqua retreat formed by a group of Methodists. But lesser known is this: PG's founders modeled the town after a community 3,000 miles east, a town in New Jersey called Ocean Grove.

So let's explore Ocean Grove, shall we?

In 1869, the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association obtained a charter which permitted them to purchase one square mile of land along the Jersey shore. Twenty Methodist church members set up tents in the woods. By 1870, Ocean Grove had been planned and surveyed. By 1872, its original six acres had grown to 230. By 1874, it boasted 474 cottages and 27 boarding houses. So in 1875, when the Pacific Grove Retreat Association set out to model its new community after another, Ocean Grove was an obvious choice.

There are quite a few near-similarities. Ocean Grove isn't on a peninsula per se, but it does border lakes to the north and south and the ocean to the east. PG has Oceanview Boulevard; OG has Ocean Avenue. PG is known for being California's last dry town (until 1969); OG is actually still a dry town. And while Pacific Grove's John Steinbeck so well captured America's downtrodden dreamers, Ocean Grove and adjacent Asbury Park spawned Bruce Springsteen, who is quite possibly the Steinbeck of rock and roll.



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
& TOURIST CENTERS



Both Groves emerged from a colony of tent cabins, but 114 of the original 600 canvas tents that once comprised Ocean Grove still exist. Many of them—consisting of a large canvas parlor in front and a wooden structure behind—are owned by fourth- and fifth-generation descendants of the original residents. They're erected every summer around the centerpiece of Ocean Grove—the 7,000-seat Great Auditorium, built in 1894, which has hosted everyone from Billy Sunday to the Beach Boys.



So distinctions abound. Our Lighthouse Avenue is their Main Street. Our Lovers Point is their Founders Park. Our shoreline has been described as otherworldly; Ocean Grove... well, it's part of a township called Neptune.

But I'll admit it. I'm intrigued, sort of the way I'd be curious to meet a second cousin whom I'm told I resemble. The next time I'm in New Jersey, I'm going to pay a visit to my hometown away from home.

*The Great  
Tidepool*



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
& TOURIST CENTERS